

A NEW ORCHARD ORIOLE FROM MEXICO

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The status of the Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) as a breeding bird in México was considered to be a moot point in 1954 (Graber and Graber, 1954) and was only partly clarified by the Mexican Check-list (Pac. Coast Avif., 1957). A. R. Phillips and Warner collected three nesting Orchard Orioles north and east of Morelia, Michoacán, in May, 1954, and in the same month Dickerman, working independently, began the collection of a series of breeding birds which now totals 48 and which formed the basis of this study. The specimens collected by Dickerman from May, 1954, through July, 1955, are in the collections of the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History. In addition 56 breeding and 219 migrant Orchard Orioles from México in the following collections were examined: Allan R. Phillips Collection, Mexico City; American Museum of Natural History; California Academy of Science; Chicago Natural History Museum; Louis Agassiz Fuertes Memorial Collection, Cornell University; Museum of Comparative Zoology; Peabody Museum, Yale University; Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia; Robert T. Moore Collection, Occidental College, Los Angeles; George M. Sutton Collection, University of Oklahoma; Texas Cooperative Wildlife Museum, College Station; Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley; D. R. Dickey Collection, Los Angeles; University of Michigan, Museum of Zoology; United States National Museum.

We are grateful to the curators of these collections for the loan of specimens in their care, especially Richard Johnston and Harrison B. Tordoff, for their consideration in allowing us to re-examine the material from Coahuila, and George M. Sutton, who had also recognized the problem presented by the Orchard Orioles of México from materials in his personal collection. John W. McMenamín kindly permitted Dickerman to examine the extensive series in the Robert T. Moore Collection. Richard Graber provided us with measurements and notes on a large series of Orchard Orioles from the United States.

Graber and Graber (1954) and Ridgway (1902) have presented measurements of series of specimens illustrating a size cline from north to southwest within the United States, with the small-sized birds in Texas, the latter having been described as the race *I. s. affinis* by Lawrence (1852). To date *affinis* has not been accepted by the A. O. U. Check-list (1957) or the Mexican Check-list. The Grabers showed that while there is a real difference in wing length between *affinis* and northern *spurius*, the amount of overlap is too great to warrant recognition of *affinis* on this character (Graber and Graber, *op. cit.*: 279). Amadon and Phillips (1947), on the basis of specimens from Coahuila, suggested that color may also be a character on which to separate *affinis*. Judging from the series of breeding birds from Coahuila and from the southern portion of the Mexican Plateau that are now available, it is evident that both color and size clines are involved. The population named *affinis* appears to have no taxonomically useful characters of its own. The size cline from large to small terminates in southern Texas and Coahuila, south and west of which a sharp break occurs to larger birds with relatively longer tails. South of this sharp break in size the chestnut of the underparts and the rump of males is much darker, with the Coahuilan birds showing variations in color from the paler coloration typical of *I. s. spurius* to the dark coloration of the populations of the Mexican Plateau. This race may be known as

Icterus spurius phillipsi new subspecies

Type.—Adult male, no. 14167 University of Minnesota, Mus. Nat. Hist., taken 1 mile west of Acámbaro, Guanajuato, México, May 7, 1958, collected by Robert W. Dickerman, original number 8746; weight 22.5 gms.; testes 10 × 6 and 8 × 6 mm.

Diagnosis.—Similar to *I. s. spurius* but larger; wing and tail measurements significantly larger than adjacent populations in Coahuila and Texas (table 1, fig. 1); juveniles differ from those of *spurius* by being much paler yellow ventrally, grayer, less rich dorsally, nearer Citrine Drab, contrasting to juveniles of *spurius* which are nearer Buffy Citrine (colors of Ridgway, 1912). Females of *phillipsi*, like those of *I. juertesi*, are inseparable from those of *spurius*.

Distribution.—Temperate riparian habitats in México, from Durango south to Michoacán, Estado de México, and Hidalgo (fig. 2).

Specimens examined.—*Icterus spurius phillipsi*; total 80, including 11 juveniles; Durango, 11; Zacatecas, 6; Jalisco, 20; Michoacán, 23; Guanajuato, 14; Estado de México, 5; Hidalgo, 1. "*Icterus spurius affinis*"; total 43, including 3 juveniles; Texas, 19; Coahuila, 15; Chihuahua, 7; Durango, 2.

Remarks.—We take great pleasure in naming this subspecies for Dr. Allan R. Phillips.

The Orchard Oriole is a widespread and common breeding bird on the Mexican

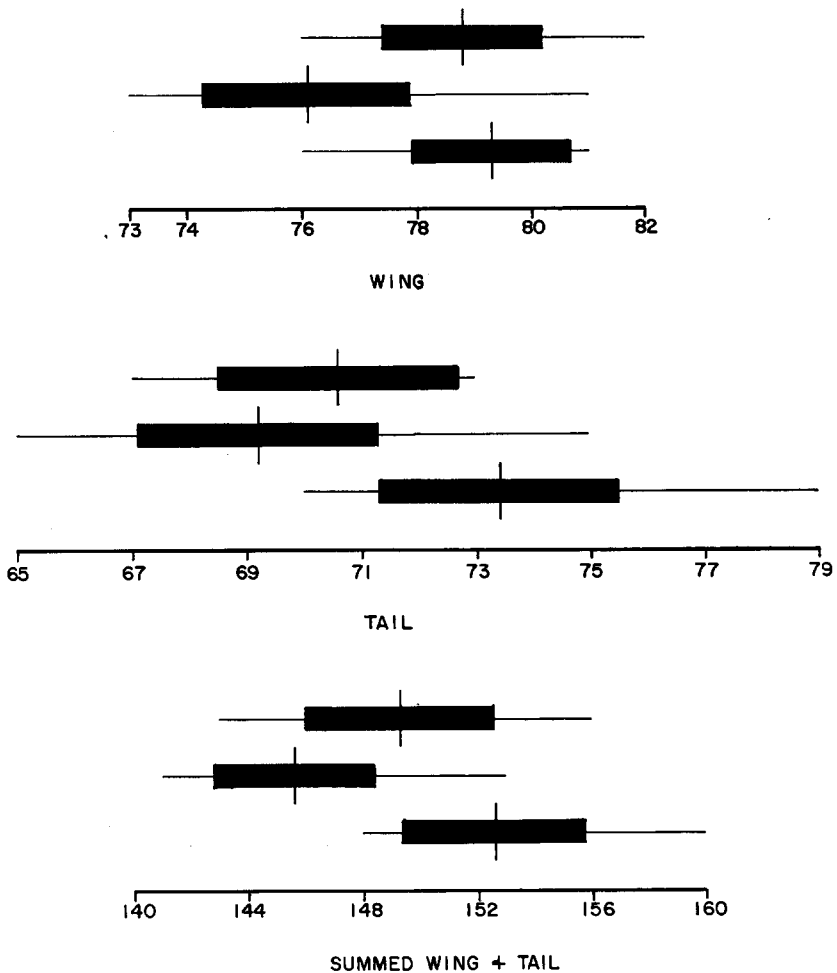


Fig. 1. Measurements of populations of male *Icterus spurius*, arranged from northeast to southwest, showing mean range and one standard deviation on either side of the mean.

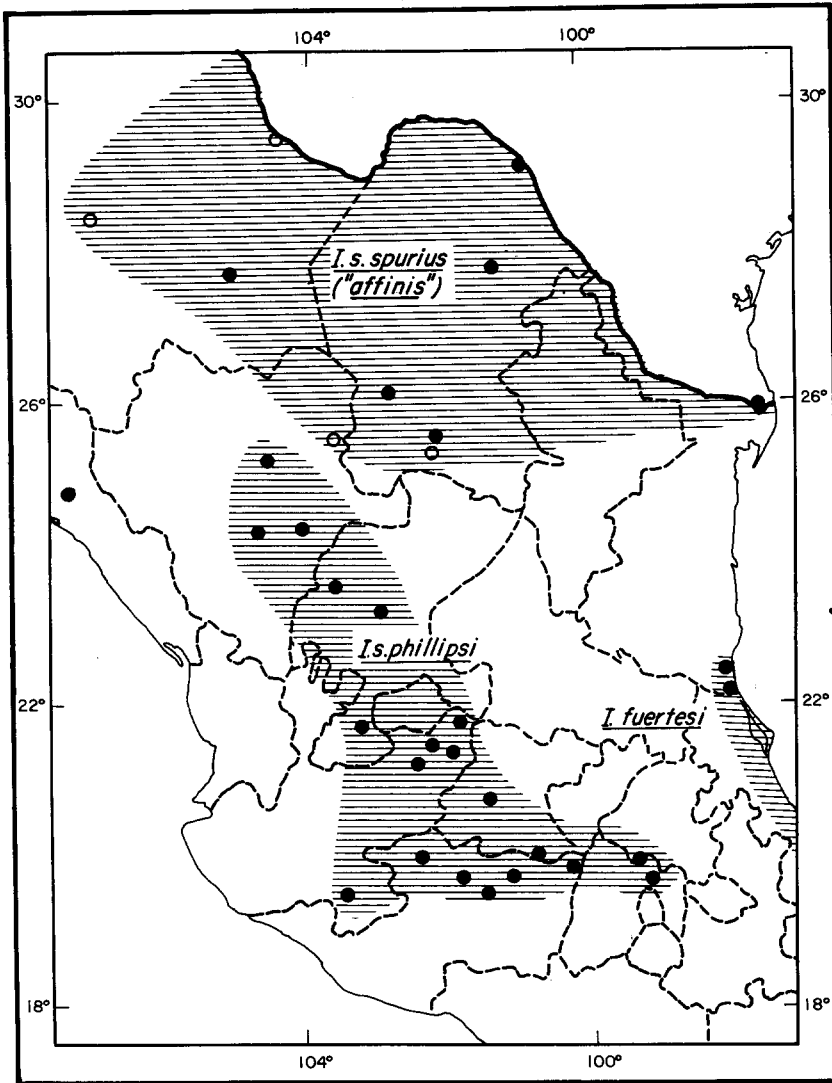


Fig. 2. The nesting range of *Icterus spurius* and *Icterus fuertesi* in México.

Plateau and is found wherever the habitat is suitable. Near Parras, Coahuila, they are common in orchards of pecan trees. Cottonwood, willow and eucalyptus trees along water courses and roadways offer suitable nesting cover. Nesting in the Mexican populations may start later than in those farther north. At Parras a newly constructed nest was found July 1; a newly fledged young was collected July 16 near Maravatio, Michoacán; a nest with four eggs containing "small" embryos, and another one with one egg and two newly hatched young were found near Jacona, Michoacán, July 25 and 26. The latest nesting date is of a nest with four stubby-tailed young collected by Dickerman at Lago Zumpango, Estado de México, September 13. Dates for 23 nests in Kansas are from May 14 to July 3; dates for 30 nests in Texas are from April 29 to July 2 (Bent, 1958).

Migrating Orchard Orioles have been collected in México as late as May 14 at Omilteme, Guerrero, and May 4 at Catemaco, Veracruz. Fall migrants have been collected on July 16 at Boca del Río, Veracruz, and July 27 at Escuinapa, Sinaloa. Graber and Graber (1954) recorded a group of six Orchard Orioles, including one adult male on July 3 and one on July 4. They assign the male from Morón, Tamaulipas, in the northern

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENTS OF ORCHARD ORIOLES
(RANGE, MEAN, AND STANDARD DEVIATION)

	No.	MALES		
		Wing	Tail	Wing + Tail
Northern <i>spurius</i>	24	76-82 (78.8) ±1.4	23 67-73 (70.6) ±2.1	23 143-156 (149.3) ±3.3
" <i>affinis</i> " ¹	27	73-81 (76.1) ±1.8	24 65-75 (69.2) ±2.1	24 141-153 (145.0) ±2.9
<i>phillipsi</i>	38	76-81 (79.3) ±1.4	36 70-79 (73.4) ±2.1	36 148-161 (152.7) ±3.2
FEMALES ²				
Northern <i>spurius</i>	14	72-81 (74.9) ±2.2	14 65-74 (67.9) ±2.0	
" <i>affinis</i> "	13	69-77 (72.6) ±2.2	12 63-69 (66.3) ±2.2	
<i>phillipsi</i>	11	71-81 (74.0) ±2.1	10 65-73 (68.6) ±3.3	

¹ Statistics do not include four specimens along border of range of "*affinis*," indicated by open circles on the map, whose measurements are: tail 72, 73, 73, 73, wing 80, 78, 80, 82 mm.

² Wear of rectrices and remiges of females is considerably more pronounced than in adult males, hence statistics on measurements of wing plus tail were not computed.

limit of the range of *I. fuertesi*, to *I. spurius*. They were uncertain whether these might have been nesting birds or very early migrants. Specimens in little worn juvenal plumage, and showing no molt, have been collected at Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, on October 1 and 6. We have made no attempt to determine the migration dates for *I. s. phillipsi*. The great amount of wear that occurs during the breeding season precludes the use of measurements as well as color comparison in the identification of fall migrants.

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